

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A data searching apparatus that searches a database of patent document data files for a desired patent document data file, based on a search condition set by a user, each patent document data file including a plurality of search keys for providing clues to know contents of the patent document data files, the search keys being categorized in a plurality of fields including an IPC symbol, an F-term, and a keyword, the data searching apparatus comprising:

a receiving unit operable to receive, from the user, a search query that is a logical formula including an AND search query and an OR search query

a displaying unit operable to display the search query received by the receiving unit on one region of a screen;

a searching unit operable to search the database for at least one patent document data file that satisfies the search query received by the receiving unit; and

an extracting unit operable to extract a plurality of frequently-used search keys for each of the fields, from the patent document data file that is a search result by the searching unit,

the searching unit includes:

a search-key-list displaying unit operable to display a list of the frequently-used search keys extracted for each of the plurality of fields by the extracting unit adjacent the search condition set by the user;

a key-selection receiving unit operable to receive, from the user, selection of at least one search key from the list displayed by the search-key-list displaying unit; and

a selective-searching retry search instruction unit operable to add the selected search key selected in the key-selection receiving unit, as an element of the OR search query for each of the fields, to the search query, create a new search query, display the new search query on another region different from the one region, and cause the searching unit to retry the search for a desired patent document data file that satisfies the new search query.

2. (Previously Presented) The data searching apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the extracting unit includes:

a data-file-list displaying unit operable to display a list of patent document data files that are search results by the searching unit;

a file-selection receiving unit operable to receive, from the user, selection of a patent document data file from the list displayed by the data-file-list displaying unit; and

a selective extracting unit operable to extract search keys, from the patent document data file selected in the file-selection receiving unit.

3. (Previously Presented) The data searching apparatus of Claim 2, wherein

the file-selection receiving unit receives, from the user, selection of a plurality of patent document data files one after another from the list displayed by the data-file-list displaying unit, and then receives, from the user, one of (a) a key extraction instruction to extract search keys from each of the selected patent document data files and (b) an output instruction to output each of the selected patent document data files,

the selective extracting unit extracts search keys from each of the selected patent document data files when the file-selection receiving unit receives the key extraction instruction,

the searching unit, every time when the file-selection receiving unit receives selection of one or a predetermined number of patent document data files, reads the selected patent document data files and stores therein the read patent document data files, and

the data searching apparatus further comprises:

a result outputting unit operable to output the patent document data files stored in the searching unit when the file-selection receiving unit receives the output instruction.

4.-16. (Cancelled)

17. (Previously Presented) The database searching apparatus of claim 1 wherein the search key display unit displays the hit ratio.

18. -19. (Cancelled)

20. (Previously Presented) The database searching apparatus of claim 1 wherein the search key display unit simultaneously displays the search keys in a plurality of categories adjacent a display of the search condition to enable a user to paste the displayed search keys so as to modify the search condition for a further search query.